# RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS

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ROMNEYA COULTERI

MATILIJA-POPPY

Prepared

by

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

of the

NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

ROMNEYA COULTERI

MATILIJA-POPPY

Papaveraceae — Poppy Family

A vigorous, woody based perennial growing to 8 ft. in height, sometimes much broader since it spreads from suckers. Herbage glaucous green, glabrous except for a few weak spines on petioles and margins of leaf blades. Branches mainly slender and wandlike with a few short laterals near the summit. Leaves alternate, 3-4 in. long, equally broad, deeply pinnatifid into 3-5 major lobes, these in turn often irregularly divided; petioles about 1 in. long, often with several weak spines. Flowers solitary at the tips of the branches; upper lateral branches of nearly equal length, thus forming a several flowered cluster. Calyx green, about 1 in. high, of 3 overlapping sepals, the tips of which form a short beak; sepals falling as the flower opens, main portion ovate but the upper inner margin extended into a broad, thin lobe covered by the adjacent sepal. Corolla clear white of crepe-like texture, forming an almost flat flower 4-9 in. across; petals 6 (rarely more or less), 2-4 in. long, about equally broad. Stamens over 100, anthers and filaments rich orange-yellow. Ovary densely setose, with 7-12 partitions and an equal number of stigmatic ridges. Capsules brown or straw-colored, 1-2 in. long, tapered to each end, rarely more than ½ in. thick, contain several hundred small black seeds, each about 1/16 in. in diam. Cotyledons entire, linear, appearing above the ground in seedlings.

Romneya Coulteri was described in 1845 by Harvey. The generic name honors T. Romney Robinson of Dublin, while the specific name is a tribute to Dr. Thos. Coulter, another Irishman, who had botanized in California in 1831-32, and who had found the first specimens. For years it was thought that there was but one species of Romneya, but in 1898 Miss Alice Eastwood of the California Academy of Sciences described a second species under the name of R. trichocalyx (the name in reference to the setose calyx). Some botanists have considered her species as merely a variety of R. Coulteri, but there are a number of distinctions between the two which are rather constant and easily seen. In R. trichocalyx the stems are more slender, the leaves are dissected into narrower lobes, the peduncles are setose just below the flowers, the calyces are covered with setose bristles and the sepals are beakless. The two species do not seem to grow together in the wild, so that no intermediate forms are known. Both have been cultivated together and hybrids have arisen, especially in Santa Barbara gardens.

The common name Matilija-Poppy was given because the plants were early known from Matilija Cañon, Ventura Co. In the Santa Ana Mtns. and the adjacent washes there are probably more individual plants of the Matilija-Poppy than in all of the rest of Southern California. They are particularly at home on the dry, rocky hillsides and in gravel of dry washes. In June the huge flowers with their white crepe-like petals and deep orange-yellow centers stand out at the summits of slender branches. Capsules mature in July, but split only slowly so seeds may be obtained for several months. Road work within areas where this plant grows tends to increase the number of individuals, since the broken root pieces distributed by grading operations give rise to new plants.

Propagation of Romneya has been considered difficult, but when properly handled it can be increased with comparative ease. Only rarely is it necessary to grow the plants from seeds. Seeds germinate readily but the delicate seedlings "damp-off" easily, are hard to transplant and require several years to produce flowers. The easiest method of propagation is to dig suckers from around an established plant. These should be taken in the late fall (about November) and planted where wanted, covered with a few inches of soil and given a thorough watering. Vigorous growth will begin in the spring and after the first season the plants will need no watering. Light, well drained soils are best, but many splendid plants are grown in the heaviest of clay soils. They will not tolerate a low, poorly drained or constantly wet situation. After the blooming period the plants should be cut back nearly to the ground. Old plants will spread out to form clumps 15-20 ft. across and must be kept under control else they will take over an entire garden. They should always be planted in full sun.

Size of flowers in Matilija-Poppies varies greatly and we have noted that plants under cultivation at the Garden consistently bear either large or small flowers, so that propagation material should be selected from plants with large flowers.

Bouquets of Matilija-Poppies will last several days if care is taken in selecting freshly opened flowers. The large size of the flowers necessitates long stems for the best results.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of the native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

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